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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH THE KOREAN MINISTER  
OF JUSTICE

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: On December 18, 2008, Ambassador Stephens paid a courtesy call on Korean Minister of Justice Kim Kyung-Han at the Gwacheon Government Complex. She raised USG concerns about international child custody and abduction issues and urged the ROK to join the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The Minister welcomed Korea's admission to the Visa Waiver Program and inquired about the status of the USG effort to obtain a site for a new Chancery. End Summary.

#### THE HAGUE CONVENTION ON CHILD ABDUCTION

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¶2. (SBU) At a cordial introductory meeting on December 18, 2008, the Ambassador suggested to Korean Minister of Justice Kim Kyung-Han that increasingly numerous people-to-people and other ties between the U.S. and Korea meant the two countries needed to work together even more closely on issues like child custody. The Minister said the MOJ is aware of the Melanson child abduction case and assured the Ambassador of his Ministry's cooperation. The Minister also indicated the Ministry is studying the possibility of accession to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, but the results of the study are not yet available. The Ambassador urged a positive review. (Note: Embassy had heard earlier that the study will be finalized in January and that we will be passed a copy. End note.)

#### VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

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¶3. (SBU) The Minister noted with pleasure that the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) was recently put in place for Korean citizens. The Ambassador underscored that Korean membership in the VWP demonstrates the strength of the U.S.-ROK relationship. The Ambassador and the Minister agreed to continue to work together closely on the VWP to make sure that it proceeds smoothly.

#### NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND; OLD TIES

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¶4. (SBU) Minister Kim asked if the U.S. Embassy was still in the Gwanghwamun area of downtown Seoul. The Ambassador responded that it is, and outlined briefly the status of ongoing efforts to reach agreement with the ROKG for a new site at Camp Coiner. The process had been a long and a frustrating one, but we were looking forward to moving ahead on the new site.

¶5. (SBU) Finally, Minister Kim pulled out a handwritten note from his wife, saying he had a personal favor to ask the Ambassador, that of helping his wife locate a former Peace Corps volunteer who had lived with his wife's family in Taegu in the sixties. The Ambassador said she would try to assist.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The Justice Minister's awareness of high-level concern about the Melanson child abduction case is encouraging. Post will continue to raise the child abduction issue until the Melanson case is resolved, and will continue to work toward ROKG joining of the Hague Convention on child abduction. The Justice Minister was only the latest of the dozens of high-ranking Korean

officials who have asked the Ambassador, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Korea herself, to help in finding old friends and contacts. The reach of Peace Corps in Korea, more than twenty-five years after it departed, is remarkable. End comment.

STEPHENS